

Will the broadcast flag interfere with consumers ability to make copies of DTV content for their personal use, either on personal video recorders or removable media?

As described by many of the proponents, the broadcast flag would interfere with consumers, and indeed any "nonapproved" creator of video content from creating, copying or viewing their own work. In essence it would make the equipment malfunction if the broadcast flag was not found, thus preventing that equipment from being used for anything other than viewing "approved" content.

Would the digital flag interfere with consumers ability to send DTV content across networks, such as home digital networks connecting digital set top boxes, digital recorders, digital servers and digital display devices?

It would again interfere with anyone other than the monopoly holders ("Professional producers") from creating or distributing content, no matter what the distribution media. Networks, recordings via tape, CD or DVD or any other distribution media would be required to filter based on the "broadcast flag" and thus would not be compatible with consumer created content.

Would the broadcast flag requirement limit consumers ability to use their existing electronic equipment (equipment not built to look for the flag) or make it difficult to use older components with new equipment that is compliant with the broadcast flag standard?

As I understand it one of the problems with the broadcast flag idea is that it would not work with older equipment. This could make it possible for the strange scenario of obsolete or imported equipment becoming valuable because consumers don't want to have their rights to time shift or otherwise record and store broadcast programs interfered with. If the full implications of the concept are followed, would it become illegal to broadcast anything without the broadcast flag? Look at the HDTV fiasco - people are not rushing out to spend thousands of dollars on HDTV equipment and the stations aren't building the new transmission facilities. The FCC has had to repeatedly back up on plans to move forward to full digital TV because of consumer resistance. The problems of operating a video component like a VCR that would look for the broadcast flag with an older receiver or cable box that does not support that function would make most of us simply not buy the new equipment.

Would a broadcast flag requirement limit the development of future equipment providing consumers with new options?

It would ensure that any future development of equipment, especially computer software and hardware based equipment, would be done in somewhere else. The real impact would be to stifle all development that was not funded by the media conglomerates. The broadcast flag requirement would be like passing a law that requires all motor vehicles to have a harness with a horse or mule attached to the front of the vehicle so the vehicle can be pulled off the road if the motor dies. It can be made to sound very attractive and nice but in real operation it prevents all improvements and makes everything subject to irrelevant technical standards.

What will be the cost impact, if any, that a broadcast flag requirement would have on consumer electronics equipment?

It would drive the cost up for American consumers and would make much of the newer or cutting edge technology unavailable. Since other countries would not implement this requirement their equipment would be cheaper and

the American consumer would pay the penalty. Jobs would be lost in the USA as more firms would move offshore, and this would ultimately impact the program producers.

Other Comments:

The whole argument over digital rights management boils down to the idea that the distributors (not the authors or producers) want to control everything, including what has traditionally fallen under the "fair use" doctrine. The distributors are operating under the fallacy that a million people paying one dollar each to view a program is better than ten million paying twenty-five cents each. They are only looking to enron their short-term profits while ensuring that American consumers end up on the wrong end of the technology changes. Other countries would move forward, unencumbered by a "broadcast flag" while our communications and media industries would blindly march over the cliff of bankruptcy - and they wouldn't even see it coming until they were airborne!